duty on the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) of drugs/medicines with an abatement of 35 per cent;

(b) whether the Government have, in the process, factored in the post production expenses incurred by pharma companies; and

(c) whether this changeover from excise on transfer price to excise on MRP would entail re-packaging/marking of revised prices, on the stocks lying in factories as required under Drug Price Control Order regulations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) The Government notified retail price based assessment of excise duty for allopathic drugs and medicines with effect from 8.1.2005 *vide* Notification No. 2/2005-Central Excise (NT.) dated 7.1.2005 prescribing abatement of 35%. Subsequently, in view of representations from the pharmaceutical industry and the recommendations of the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals, the level of abatement has been increased from 35% to 40% with effect from 23.2.05 *vide* Notification No. 4/2005-Central Excise (NT.) dated 23.2.05.

(b) Government factored all material facts as per law to determine the level of abatement.

(c) Such situation may arise only when there is change in retail price.

Finance Minister's meeting

†3434. SHRIMATI MAYA SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the issue of VAT was discussed in the VAT and the pre-Budget 2005-06 discussions in the meeting of the Central and State Finance Ministers held on 3rd February, 2005; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Employment for unemployed youth in Nagaland

3435. SHRI T.R. ZELIANG: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of special package announced during 2003 for employment of 25,000 unemployed youths in Nagaland;

†Ortginal notice of the question was received in Hindi.